FAMILY SECRETS

Over two centuries ago, in 1797, George III was King, William Pitt was Prime Minister, and Britain was at war with France. The London docks on the Isle of Dogs were soon to be dug, but transport was mainly by horse drawn carts on unmade roads, which were slowly being improved, and the newly built canal system. There were no cars or railways, no telephone or telegraph, and only a limited postal system. Even in London, there were no streetlights. Slaves were still being imported into the vast British Empire. But the industrial revolution was spreading. Factories were springing up, and as a result the coal and metal mining industries were growing rapidly. There was no age restriction on working, and children worked in factories and mines as soon as they were old enough to fulfil a useful function. However, most of the population were still country people working on the land, or in the thriving shipping and fishing industries.

The sixteen great great grandparents of Maureen and Eileen Brown were all born in the next twenty years. Seven were born in London and four in the Home Counties. Others came from Northamptonshire, Staffordshire and Wiltshire, and one, although a British citizen, was born in Menorca. All were English, with their roots in the farming and seafaring communities.

James Brown was christened on 23 June 1799 at the parish church of St Denis in Warminster, Wiltshire. His parents, Samuel and Sarah Brown, could trace their roots back for many generations in Warminster and the surrounding villages. James was the sixth of their nine children.

Sarah Austin, the third daughter of Edward Austin by his third wife Anne, was christened in the old church of St Pancras, aged one month, on 11 June 1801. Edward was originally a coachmaster, but using money left to him by his second wife, had bought the George Inn in Leather Lane.

William Daniel and **Sophia Morgan** also came from this area. William, born 1798 in Clerkenwell, was the son of Robert and Mary Daniel, of Shoreditch. Sophia came from a rather better-off background. When she was christened at St Pancras Old Church in 1797, her father William Morgan was farming Morgan's Farm, 32 acres in Kentish Town he had inherited form his grandfather, also William Morgan. The farmhouse has long disappeared, and the site is now deep in central London, about a mile north of Euston Station, in the triangle formed by Camden Road, Kentish Town Road and York Way.

Sophia's mother, and William's wife, was Maria Barenger. She had inherited a portfolio of houses both from her father, in London, and from her mother, in Kent. Barenger is a Hugenot name.

The Huguenots were French protestants who fled from France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to escape persecution by the ruling Roman

Catholics. Many came to London, and at least six Huguenot churches were established there.

William Bright was born in Bedfordshire, and was christened at Totternhoe in 1799. **Sarah Gates** was christened in nearby Northchurch, Hertfordshire, in 1804.

William Dumpleton, christened 1801 in Chalgrave, Buckinghamshire, came from a family of agricultural labourers long established in this area, as did **Susan Pantling**, christened in Eggington in 1799.

William Thwaites was born, he later claimed, in 1810 within the sound of Bowbells, and so was a true cockney. There is no record of his baptism, but his father John was a gunner in the Royal Atillery.

Catherine Hope, eighth child of John and Mary Hope, was christened in Wednesfield, near Birmingham, in1807.

In Northamptonshire, **Thomas Bird** was christened in Everdon in 1816 and **Mary Ann Wrinckles** two years later in Bugbrook.

Back in London, **Thomas Edmund Boyce Huntley** was christened in Bermondsey in 1811. His father Thomas was born in Lowestoft; he came from a long line of seafarers, although he himself came to London to marry and worked as a tailor.

Emma Bennett's father was a timber merchant in Rotherhithe, where she was born and christened in 1817, and **George Thomas Wright** was christened nearby in Deptford in 1808. His father, John Wrench Wright, like many residents of this area of the south bank of the Thames, was a lighterman on the river.

Lightermen conveyed goods between ships and the quayside. They took their name from this process of 'lightening' the ship. Lightermen had worked from the Thames wharves for centuries, but in the nineteenth century they secured the 'free water clause', exempting them from charges in the enclosed docks that were then being built. They were thus able to enter the docks and receive or deliver goods directly to or from vessels. Although they worked long hours, lightermen enjoyed high status. Entry to the trade was tightly controlled, and each man had to serve an apprenticeship of between five and ten years. Jobs as lightermen were often passed down the generations.

Mary Ann Revely was born to British parents in Menorca, in the Mediterranean, in 1814. Her father Henry, a boatbuilder, married Margaret her mother in her home town of Portsmouth, but it was to his home in South Shields that they returned to baptise their eldest child in 1815.

Menorca had been under British sovereignty for much of the eighteenth century but was finally transferred to Spain in 1802 by the Treaty of Amiens.

These sixteen people were the grandparents of Maureen and Eileen's own grandparents.

James Brown left his native Wiltshire as a young man and came to London to work as a carpenter. In 1827 he married Sarah Austin at St George Hanover Square. They had seven children together, including **James Edwin Brown**, christened at St Pancras in 1830.

William Daniel married Sophia Morgan in Clerkenwell in 1819. William was a poulterer, and the couple has seven children together, including their last, **Jane Daniel**, in 1836.

In Bedfordshire, William Bright married Sarah Gates in Houghton Regis in 1823, and had six children, including **William Bright** in 1839. William Dumpleton married Susan Pantling at Leighton Buzzard in 1820, and their ten children included **Phoebe Ann Dumpleton**, born in 1840.

In 1846, William Dumpleton was committed to three months hard Labour at the New House of Correction at Bedford. His crime had been to leave the service of his employer, Rev Miles Bland DD, without permission. William was a model prisoner and worked at the mill while serving his sentence. He is described in the prison record as being age 45, 5' 3 1/4" tall, with dark hair, grey eyes, a fresh complexion, married, a labourer, stout and with a scar on his left thumb.

After his release, William continued to work as a shepherd. Phoebe, along with her siblings, her mother, and most of her extended family, worked as a straw plaiter.

Straw plaiting involved splitting stems of corn lengthways with iron splitters and plaiting it into a variety of patterns, using five, seven or twenty plaits. Much plaiting was done indoors, but it could be done sitting outside, or even walking along. The straw was plaited into twenty-yard lengths and sold for making hats and baskets. The chalky fields of Bedfordshire produced straw that was ideal for plaiting, and this area became the centre of a thriving industry. A child could begin learning to plait straw as early as two years old and at three could be sent to the local plaiting school. The authorities stipulated that reading and writing should be included, but plaiting was the main subject taught, the teachers, with few exceptions, being unable to read and write themselves. A woman with her children could earn considerably more by plaiting straw than her husband earned as a farm labourer.

Phoebe was illiterate and remained so throughout her life, but she was the only such family member of this generation. Farther from London illiteracy was more usual, particularly among women, but by the end of the nineteenth century, literacy was the norm.

William Thwaites had become an itinerant tinplate worker and brazier, but after marrying Catherine Hope in Ashton, Birmingham in 1832, settled in Daventry, Northamptonshire. Their six children were all born there, including **William Skilbeck Thwaites** in 1837.

Tinplate consists of sheets of iron dipped in molten tin and run through rollers. The process was developed in the early eighteenth century, when tinsmiths

working with hand tools hammered and soldered the material to make lamps, boxes and similar products.

Thomas Bird and Mary Ann Winckles has also moved to Daventry, where Thomas was a road labourer. Mary Ann was christened there in 1837 at the age of 19, shortly before their marriage. Their four children included **Ann Maria Bird**, born in 1838.

Thomas Edmund Boyce Huntley followed in his father's footsteps as a tailor in east London. After marrying Emma Bennett in 1840 in Limehouse, they had four children, including **Kingsby William Huntley** in 1842. This unusual first name was given to a number of his seafaring ancestors from Suffolk, after his 3xgreat grandmother, Elizabeth Kingsby.

Finally, also in London, George Thomas Wright married Mary Ann Revely in Woolwich. Their five children included **Mary Ann Wright**, born in 1846.

So by 1850, Eileen and Maureen's eight great grandparents were growing up, aged between 4 and 20 years old. They were also slowly gravitating towards London. Whereas the previous generations had come from as far afield as Birmingham, South Shields and Cumberland, four of these eight were established in London, and the other four in Bedfordshire and Northants.

The 1861 census gives us a snapshot of the family:-

James and Sarah Brown were living in Harrington Street, St Pancras with James Edwin, their son and his new wife, dressmaker Jane Daniel. James and his son were both carpenters, and the father was working at the Colosseum.

The Colosseum was a diorama, a circular building built to display a panorama of London as seen from the top of St Paul's Cathedral, and measuring 40,000 square feet. In addition, it offered a saloon decorated with sculpture and objects d'art, a landscape garden in which had been cut ravines, mountains and dells, and a conservatory 300 feet in length that was filled with exotic flowers and plants. An imitation Swiss cottage, which looked out onto a mountain waterfall, completed the range of entertainment. On the roof there was a circular veranda, and a dome that housed an enormous camera obscura. In 1844, an arena was installed for the newly invented sport of roller-skating.

Jane's father William had left his wife and family over twenty years before to seek his fortune in the United States. He did not return and by 1851 Jane's mother Sophia was describing herself as a widow. After bringing up seven children unaided, in 1861 she was also looking after her 83 year old mother Maria at her house in Trafalgar Place, St Pancras.

Phoebe Ann Dumpleton had married William Bright in Houghton Regis. Of their parents, only William Dumpleton was still alive and working as an agricultural labourer at the age of 60. He died in 1867 of heart disease.

In 1858, when Phoebe was heavily pregnant with their first child, William travelled to Dunstable and enlisted in the Royal Marines. He served aboard

HMS Exmouth, the flagship of the British Baltic fleet for a year before returning to Milton Barracks near Gravesend, Kent. Phoebe and their young daughter were living with them there.

William Skilbeck Thwaites and Ann Maria Bird were both living with their respective parents in Daventry, but due to marry in October 1861.

Thomas Huntley the tailor and his wife Emma were still in Bermondsey, where their son Kingsby William was planning to become an apprentice waterman. His apprentice master would be Mary Ann Wright. After the death of her lighterman husband George Thomas in 1846, Mary Ann continued to bind apprentices, although she also worked as a nurse at Greenwich Hospital. She lived with her daughter in Church Street, Deptford.

Five months after starting his apprenticeship, Kingsby married his apprentice mistress' daughter, also Mary Ann Wright. Although described as of full age on her marriage certificate, Mary Ann Wright was in fact only fifteen when her marriage to Kingsby Huntley took place.

The minimum age at which young people could marry changed regularly in the past. Long ago it was seven, but in 1660 it was fixed at 14 for a boy and 12 for a girl. Parental consent for those under 21, so not of full age, was introduced for a time but removed by 1823. It was only in 1929 that the minimum age was raised to 16, and parental consent reintroduced.

James Brown continued to work as a carpenter at the Colosseum until it closed in 1864. Sarah died in 1865 and James in 1867. Both are buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, where their gravestone still stands

James' son James Edwin Brown continued to work as a carpenter, living with his wife Jane in Limehouse, where his son **James Austin Brown** had been born in 1863. In 1870 he left for America, where he worked as a machinist, but never returned. A later grant of probate gives his death as taking place on 21 August 1876 in the United States. His wife was describing herself as a widow by 1881. She lived on in London until 1915, when she died age 79 at her home in Finchley following a fall down the stairs.

William and Phoebe Bright remained in Kent. William had been invalided out of the Marines in 1869, and was working as a batman, a domestic servant to an officer of the Royal Engineers at Brompton Barracks, still the home of the Royal School of Military Engineering today. While there he and Phoebe brought up their three children, including **Elizabeth Agnes Bright**, born in 1865. William died of tuberculosis in 1872, and a year later, Phoebe married Thomas Saywell, a shoemaker. She lived with him in Sittingbourne, Kent until her death in 1911 at the age of 71.

William Skilbeck Thwaites with his wife Ann Maria moved to Weedon Bec, just outside Daventry, and there established a tinplate shop, while bringing up nine children, including **John Henry Thwaites**, born there in 1871. William died of bronchitis in 1879, but Ann Maria continued to run the shop until about 1890,

when she moved to London where she for a time ran a newsagents shop in Hampstead.

Back in London's docklands, Kingsby Huntley had completed his apprenticeship and became a freeman of the Company of Watermen, later becoming an inspector for the Company. In 1871 his fourth child, **Mary Ann Huntley**, was born.

Each month Kingsby appeared before the Company Court bringing charges against watermen for offences such as overloading boats and using abusive language. His appearances stopped quite suddenly after July 1874, and in October he is reported in the Court minutes as having absconded and left England, abandoning Mary Ann and their four children. Nothing more is known about him, but in 1880 his wife married Thomas Tisdell, describing herself as a widow. Thomas & Mary Ann already had two children together. A few years later, Thomas also left England and, although still married to Mary Ann, was married again to Rose Dogan, a French speaking Canadian. They had six children, but only two survived infancy. Mary Ann again described herself as a widow and continued to live in South-East London until her death at the age of 87 in 1933.

One of Kingsby's children later tried to find him, following up rumours that he was in Australia, but there is no record of him under that name there. It has also been suggested that he emigrated to America where he had another family, but again there is no such record.

James Austin Brown was apprenticed to a saddle maker in Kent. There he met and married Elizabeth Bright and they set up home together in Northfleet. There they had three sons, Sidney Austin born 1885, William Edwin born 1886 and **Herbert Thomas Brown**, born 17 February 1888 at their home in Dover Road, Northfleet. Their daughter Doris was born there in 1889.

John Henry Thwaites also worked in leather. He came to London where he met and married Mary Ann Huntley in 1890. Their first daughter Maud, born 1891, was followed by their second, **Dora Louise Thwaites**, born at their new home at 5 Eugenia Road Rotherhithe on 3 February 1893. These were followed over the next twelve years by four sons, John, Frederick, Leslie and Thomas, and a further daughter Winifred much later in 1917.

Elizabeth Brown died in 1928 at the age of 62, and her husband in 1935, age 72. Mary Ann Thwaites died in 1949 age 78 and her husband in 1951 at the age of 80, both at their home in Randlesdown Road Sydenham.

On 11 February 1904, six days before his sixteenth birthday, Herbert Brown enlisted in the Royal Navy, claiming to be nearly seventeen years old. He served on shore there until 8 May 1906, when he went to sea aboard *HMS Triumph*.

He served in the Royal Navy until the end of the First World War as a cook, seeing action aboard *HMS Superb* at the battle of Jutland. During this time he

married Dora Thwaites, and she gave birth to Ivy and Dora, the first two of his four daughters – or so he told his family and friends.

In fact, his Royal Navy service record at the National Archives reveals that he left the Navy at his own request on 6 September 1907 and returned to shore, and to his previous occupation as a baker. In 1911 he was living with his father in Greenwich, and working with him as a baker. He did indeed marry Dora Louise Thwaites on 1 November 1913 at St Katherine's church in Eugenia Road, Rotherhithe.

Ivy was born at their home in nearby Ablett Street on 6 October 1914, and was christened at St Katherine's on 25th October, as Ivy Dora Maud Brown, the daughter of Herbert Thomas and Dora Louise Brown, of 30 Ablett Street.

Her birth certificate however tells a different story. The birth was registered after the christening, and outside the statutory 40 day limit, on 10 December 1914 by her mother, Alice Brown, formerly Alice Knight. The father is listed as Herbert Brown, a journeyman baker now a private in the Royal Field Artillery, and the birth as having taken place at 30 Ablett Street.

We will probably never know just what happened. An Alice Knight was born a few streets away from Herbert in Northfleet in 1888, but she was still living there in 1911 and married there in 1915. More likely is the Alice Maud Knight born in Rotherhithe in 1898. Her elder brother George was a baker and she was living nearby, in Parfitt Street Rotherhithe, in 1911. She shares a middle name with Ivy. As she was just 16 years old when Ivy was born, it is possible that Herbert and Dora resolved to bring the baby up as their own.

There is no record of Herbert Brown serving in the Royal Field Artillery at this time, and indeed there is no rank of private in that regiment. The ordinary soldiers are gunners.

It is not clear whether Ivy herself was ever aware of this situation. Family members recall her saying that she had never seen her birth certificate, so it is possible that she never knew.

The certificate recording the birth of Herbert and Dora's second child, Dora Florence, on 15 April 1916, shows the father as Herbert Thomas Brown, foreman baker, and the mother as Dora Louise Brown, formerly Thwaites.

Herbert was called up to rejoin the Royal Navy on 14 May 1918. The British armed services were struggling to find replacements for their depleted forces, and as a previous serviceman Herbert would have been a target, even at the age of 30. He did serve on *HMS Superb*, though not at the battle of Jutland, and was demobbed as an officers' cook class 2 in May 1919.

Herbert spent all the rest of his working life as a baker, living with his wife Dora in Rotherhithe. Their third daughter Eileen Joan May was born on 7 August 1927, and their fourth, Maureen Winifred on 2 July 1930, both at the house in Eugenia Road that had first been occupied by their grandfather, John Henry Thwaites, and where their great grandmother, Mary Ann Tisdell (formerly Huntley and originally Wright) had lived for a time.

As teenagers, Eileen and Maureen were still living in Eugenia Road when the Second World War began in 1939. London was becoming more dangerous and along with many others the children were evacuated, Eileen going first to Worthing and later to Wales.

After the war Eileen worked in a bicycle shop in West Wickham. There she met Charles Buckland, who ran the nearby newsagents.

Charles was an orphan. He had been found on a doorstep as a newborn baby in 1898, and been brought up by a foster mother, Henrietta Buckland, whose surname he had adopted. He had chosen his birthdate as 5 November, a memorable date, and given himself the middle name of Guy to correspond. He left school at the earliest possible age and worked in the Hotel Cecil as a bootblack, before joining the Royal Flying Corps and seeing active service flying over France as an observer. After the war he had owned and run a series of newsagents, before meeting and marrying Eileen in 1946 – or so he said.

In fact Charles was not an orphan. He was the first child of Lucretia Mabel Penrose, born on 5 November 1898 in the infirmary of a girls' orphanage in Southwark, and given the middle name of Guy by her. Mabel, as she was known, was the second of the five daughters of Richard Penrose, a mineral water manufacturer in Redruth, Cornwall. She had run away from home and come to London to have her illegitimate child, and was later joined there by Frederick Bawden, an employee at her father's factory. They did not marry, but Mabel adopted the name Bawden, and a further child, Gertrude Ella Bawden, was born in 1900. Frederick also assumed the middle name Charles. Both children were soon boarded out with Henrietta Buckland in Gypsy Hill, Norwood, using the surname Bawden.
Frederick Bawden was almost certainly working at a gold mine in India when Charles was conceived, and DNA comparisons suggest Charles' father was Albert Edward Rowe, born in Plymouth but working as a newsagent in Redruth at the time.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, local poor law boards of guardians were increasingly boarding-out orphan or deserted children with suitable foster-parents to avoid placing them in the workhouse. The foster-parents were paid up to four shillings a week for each child, and this could be a lucrative source of income for the families who took them in.

The Penrose family was reasonably well to do, and it is likely that they paid the boarding out costs of the two children.

Fred returned to Redruth and the mineral water factory, and Mabel went to live with her sister Ella in St Just, the most westerly town in Cornwall. Both separately married and became respected members of their communities. Their friends and families knew nothing about their London adventure. Many of their grandchildren still live in the west of Cornwall.

Charles Bawden did indeed leave school on the earliest possible date, his fourteenth birthday. He did work at the Hotel Cecil, but did not serve in the

Royal Flying Corps. He was called up to the RAF in October 1918, just three weeks before the armistice, under the name Buckland. He served as a batman to an RAF officer, probably at the holtel, which served as HQ of thr RAF at the time. He gave his previous occupation as vulcaniser.

After the war, Charles continued to use the name Buckland, but it was not until 1929 that he formally adopted it by deed poll. He married Lilian Rogers in 1921 and their only child Peter was born in 1923. The marriage was short lived, and by 1927 the couple had separated. When Charles met Eileen in 1946, he was still married to Lilian, and so was not free to marry again. Charles and Eileen's two children Jane, in 1947, and Richard, in 1949, were both born before Lilian eventually agreed to a divorce in 1951. Charles and Eileen were then married in London, although they lived at the time in Southwater. Charles kept his birthdetails and the existence of his previous marriage a secret from his other two children, and it was not until after his death that his daughter first found and met her half brother Peter. She also met several other descendants of his mother in West Cornwall..

Peter Buckland and his wife Joyce had two children, Michael and David. Ivy married Herbert Howell and had two children, Trevor and Christopher. Dora worked as a Nurse and later ran a Guest House on the Isle of Wight. She never married. Maureen married Geoffrey Hall in 1952 and their three children Susan, Michael and Jonathan were born over the next ten years.

THREE COUPLES

Bert and Dora

Charles and Eileen

Geoffrey and

Eugenia Road before it was redeveloped